



*Hard Hit by Economy:*

## **Trending Down: More Divorced Parents Asking for Changes in Child Support Payments**

**Children Suffer as Parents See Income Dwindle**

(Vienna, VA)—[SmolenPlevy](#) family law attorneys [Alan Plevy](#) and Kyung (Kathryn) Dickerson report a dramatic increase in the number of clients seeking modifications in their child support payments. Lost jobs, reduced salaries and bonuses along with unexpected furloughs have all contributed to parents looking to pay less.

Plevy says the pinch is being felt on all sides, by parents who have custody and have lost their jobs—and now need a support modification for more money, and by non-custodial parents who can no longer pay the court-ordered amount. Plevy says the issue doesn't break down along gender lines. "Both men and women have custody, or are paying child support—and now find themselves caught short by the economic downturn. We've had situations where both parents have lost their jobs," explains Plevy. Ultimately, says Plevy, it's the child who suffers.

SmolenPlevy's [Kyung \(Kathryn\) Dickerson](#) says communication is crucial during these difficult times. "You need to be proactive," advises Dickerson. One goal is to try to work together to lower your children's expenses—never an easy challenge. Courts still have to be notified of changes—and while parents agree on a modification, the courts still have to go along. Child support continues to accrue under any existing orders, unless there is an agreement or an order modifying it. Child support is the right of the child, not of the parent receiving the child support. It can take months for a court to make a modification. Simply doing nothing results in arrears that you will owe.

From an attorney's standpoint, the first thing Alan Plevy seeks is information. "Why are they losing their job? When? Are they getting severance that can help fill the gap for a time? Will they receive unemployment?" Plevy asks. Most of all "can the parent get another job, even if it's part-time, to help with expenses? In the present economy, parents have to be creative about their job searches, looking beyond their field has become necessary and is something that clients need to explore."

The loss of income also affects what noncustodial parents do during their visitation. "Disney Dads" are now visiting parks, museums and other free of less expensive activities.

There are no fines for those who don't pay child support, but interest is added to back payments. Jail is an option, but Plevy says the court distinguishes between those who are unable to pay, and those who are avoiding responsibility.

Alan Plevy and Kyung (Kathryn) Dickerson are available to discuss this and other family law issues. Media inquiries contact Celina Fabrizio at (614) 245-1113 or [celina@onthemarcmedia.com](mailto:celina@onthemarcmedia.com).